

# HISPANIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

September 15 - October 15, 2006

In 1968, Congress authorized President Lyndon B. Johnson to proclaim a week in September as National Hispanic Heritage Week. The observance was expanded in 1988 to a monthlong celebration (Sept. 15-Oct. 15). During this month, America celebrates the culture and traditions of U.S. residents who trace their roots to Spain, Mexico, and the Spanish-speaking nations of Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Sept. 15 was chosen as the starting point for the celebration because it is the anniversary of independence of five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on Sept. 16 and Sept. 18, respectively.

*U.S. Census Bureau*

## Some statistical facts on Hispanic Americans

**42.7 million:** The estimated Hispanic population of the United States as of July 1, 2005, making people of Hispanic origin the nation's largest ethnic or race minority. Hispanics constitute 14 percent of the nation's total population.

**102.6 million:** The projected Hispanic population of the United States as of July 1, 2050. According to this projection, Hispanics will constitute 24 percent of the nation's total population on that date.

**49%:** The percentage of the Hispanic-origin population that lives in California or Texas. California is home to 12.4 million Hispanics, and Texas is home to 7.8 million.

**13:** The number of states with at least half a million Hispanic residents. These states are: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Texas and Washington.

**43 %:** The proportion of New Mexico's population that is Hispanic, highest of any state. Hispanics also made up more than one-third of the population in California and Texas, at 35 percent each.

**4.6 million:** The Hispanic population of Los Angeles County, California — the largest of any county in the nation.

*U.S. Census Bureau*

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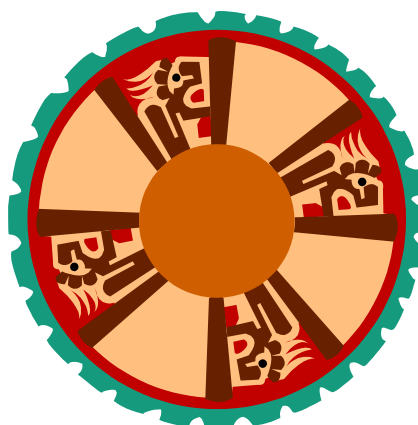
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### **National Hispanic Heritage Month, 2006**

A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America

Americans are a diverse people, yet we are bound by common principles that teach us what it means to be American citizens. During National Hispanic Heritage Month, we recognize the many contributions of Hispanic Americans to our country.

Through hard work, faith in God, and a deep love of family, Hispanic Americans have pursued their dreams and contributed to the strength and vitality of our Nation. They have enriched the American experience and excelled in business, law, politics, education, community service, the arts, science, and many other fields. Hispanic entrepreneurs are also helping build a better, more hopeful future for all by creating jobs across our country. The number of Hispanic owned businesses is growing at three times the national rate, and increasing numbers of Hispanic Americans own their own homes. We continue to benefit from a rich Hispanic culture and we are a stronger country because of the talent and creativity of the many Hispanic Americans who have shaped our society. Throughout our history, Hispanic

Americans have also shown their devotion to our country in their military service. Citizens of Hispanic descent have fought in every war since our founding and have taken their rightful place as heroes in our Nation's history. Today, Americans of Hispanic descent are serving in our Armed Forces with courage and honor, and their efforts are helping make America more secure and bringing freedom to people around the world.

As we celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month, we applaud the accomplishments of Hispanic Americans and recognize the contributions they make to our great land. To honor the achievements of Hispanic Americans, the Congress, by Public Law 100 402, as amended, has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation designating September 15 through October 15 as "National Hispanic Heritage Month...." (*full text available at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)*)

GEORGE W. BUSH

## Hispanic American Literature: Divergence & Commonality

By Virgil Suarez

Full article available at <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0200/ijse/latino1.htm>

In an autobiographical sketch written in 1986, the respected Chicano American novelist Rudolfo Anaya observed that "if I am to be a writer, it is the ancestral voices of...[my]... people who will form a part of my quest, my search."

Ancestral voices are very much a part of Hispanic American literature today, a tradition harking back more than three centuries that has witnessed a dramatic renaissance in the past generation. As the Hispanic experience in the United States continues to confront issues of identity, assimilation, cultural heritage and artistic expression, the works of Hispanic American writers are read with a great deal of interest and passion.

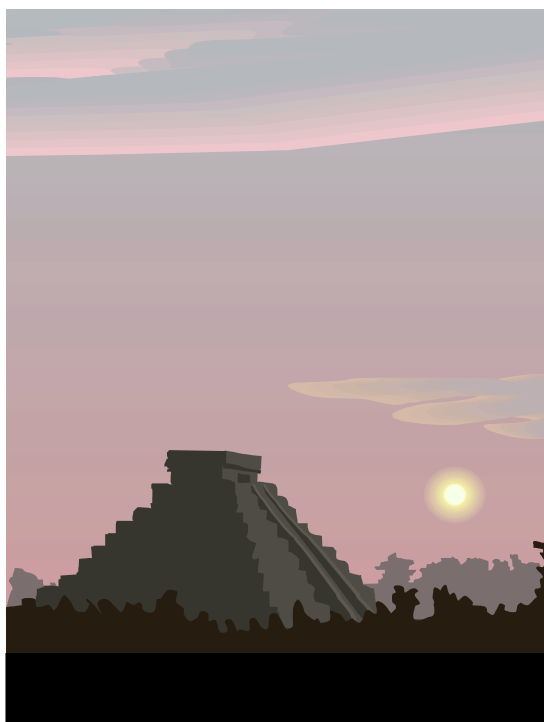
In a sense, the literature functions as a mirror, a reflection of the way Hispanic Americans are viewed by the mainstream culture -- but not always the majority. Readers and critics alike tend to celebrate this literature. It is rich, diverse, constantly growing, blending the history that infuses it with a impassioned feeling of contemporaneity.

In essence, the boom in the literature today is being forged in English, by people who live and

work in the United States -- not in Spanish, as was the case with writers of generations and centuries past. This is a key difference, and a point of departure.

True, there are still some very real issues and problems facing Hispanic American writers in terms of finding outlets and venues for their work, as there are for other multicultural artists and, to be sure, writers in general. Although more work is being issued each year by major publishing houses, most of the interesting and engaging literature comes from small, independent presses that rely upon U.S. Government, private and university grants for stability. Literary journals and reviews always have been an outlet for Hispanic American

voices, and some of the best work is coming from such sources. Increasingly, though, with the recognition associated with the nation's most prestigious literary awards -- the Before Columbus Foundation Award, the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize -- Hispanic American authors are being courted by the publishing establishment.



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